

New and unusual bird records from the Sudan

by F. R. Lambert

Received 18 April 1986

During the 3 months February to April 1983, G. Richards, L. Richards and I observed 6 species previously unrecorded in the Sudan, and these are documented here, as well as other unusual sightings.

RED KITE *Milvus milvus*

Two kites observed at Erkowit (18°49'N, 37°01'E) in the Red Sea Hills on 28 Feb were identified as *M. milvus* by their deeply forked tails, large white inner-primary patch and whitish heads. This is apparently the first record for the Sudan (G. Nikolaus). The northwestern African population of *M. milvus* is sedentary (Brown *et al.* 1982), whilst those from north and central Europe are mainly migratory with some birds wintering on the North African coast (Etchécopar & Hue 1967, Cramp & Simmons 1980). Elsewhere in Africa the species is rare, though there is a record from South Africa, and another from East Africa (Brown *et al.* 1982), as well as others from Lebanon (Macfarlane 1978, apparently on southward migration), from Israel (Arnold 1962) and from Suez and Giza in Egypt (Bijlsma 1983, Goodman & Watson 1983). The sightings from Erkowit suggest that some of these birds may in fact overwinter along the Red Sea coast, probably entering Africa via the Middle East.

PURPLE GALLINULE *Porphyrio porphyrio*

We saw c. 25 of this easily identified species in marshland near Kosti (13°11'N, 32°38'E), 15-18 March. There are no previous records for the Sudan (G. Nikolaus), the nearest populations being in the Nile delta, 2000 km to the north (Cramp & Simmons 1980), and in the upper Nile in Uganda, nearly 1200 km to the south (Snow 1978). Although fairly shy and unobtrusive, it seems strange, in view of the number of individuals seen, that there are no previous records of this species, suggesting that perhaps these birds were not resident at Kosti, though Cramp & Simmons (1980) state that populations of *P. porphyrio* are usually sedentary.

LESSER JACANA *Microparra capensis*

At least 10 were found in marshland bordering the White Nile at Kosti, 15-25 March. Cave & Macdonald (1955) state that this species is possibly resident, but uncommon, citing records from the Sudd south of Kodok, and the Pibor River to the east of the Sudd. Snow (1978) also only records this species in Sudan as occurring south of Kodok. The Lesser Jacanas at Kosti were therefore c. 360 km north of their previously documented range.

ROYAL TERN *Sterna maxima*

A single non-breeding adult Royal Tern was observed on a coral beach just north of Port Sudan on 3 March (F. R. Lambert), the first record for the Sudan, and for East Africa. In West Africa, *S.m. albidorsalis* breeds on the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, mostly migrating south along the African coast, as far as Angola in winter, smaller numbers dispersing northwards to Morocco and Tangier (Cramp 1985). Harrison (1983) reports suspicion of breeding alongside Caspian Terns *S. caspia* on Coto Donana, Spain. Vagrants, probably of the neotropical nominate race, have reached Ireland, Britain, and Norway (Cramp 1985). The race of the Port Sudan bird was not ascertained.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias nigra*

References to *C. nigra* in the Sudan (eg. Butler 1905, Macleay 1960, Moreau 1972) are now thought to refer possibly to other *Chlidonias* species (G. Nikolaus). Although Hogg *et al.* (1984) state that *C. nigra* is a passage migrant in small numbers, not recorded outside the Nile system, no specific records are cited. A Black Tern watched at close range on the Blue Nile near Tuzi Island, Khartoum on 24 February is therefore the first documented record for Sudan (G. Nikolaus). The tern, in adult winter plumage, showed the diagnostic blackish breast patches at the leading edge of the wing and uniform pale grey upperwing, rump and tail.

The main wintering area for *C. nigra* is on the Arguin Bank, West Africa (Etchécopar & Hüe 1967) and it appears to be extremely rare in East Africa, with only 3 published records from Kenya (Pearson & Lewis 1980), 7 from Ethiopia and one from Somalia (Ash 1983).

WHITE-THIGHED HORNBILL *Bycanistes albotibialis*

Several individuals were seen at Lotti Forest, in mid April. This Central and West African species, distributed from southern Nigeria and Loango to the Bwamba Forest of western Uganda (Mackworth Praed & Grant 1957) has not previously been recorded in the Sudan (G. Nikolaus).

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

One seen in subdesert scrub near Erkowit, in the Red Sea Hills on 28 February was presumably overwintering. Spring passage starts in Egypt and Israel only in the first week of April (G. Nikolaus). Four recorded at Upper Talanga (4°01'N, 32°43'E, at 950 m) in the Imatong Mountains 7-15 April may have been on migration, since these dates coincide with the latest departure dates and passage dates from Zaire and Kenya (Curry Lindahl 1981). Although their exact wintering quarters is poorly known, most *P. sibilatrix* winter in tropical Africa within the lowland forest belt from Guinea to Sudan, Zaire and Lake Victoria (Moreau 1972). However small numbers probably also winter in East Africa (Britton 1980), and Ash (1983) documents a number of sightings of overwintering birds from Somalia.

SHRIKE FLYCATCHER *Megabyas flammulatus*

A male seen in the sub-canopy at Lotti Forest (4°03'N, 32°32'E) on 18 April is the first record east of the White Nile (G. Nikolaus). This West African tropical forest species extends as far east as the Kakamega and Nandi Forests of western Kenya (Britton 1980), the published record nearest to Lotti being from the Nile at Lake Albert, some 200 km to the southwest (Hall & Moreau 1970).

COMMON WAXBILL *Estrilda astrild*

Cave & Macdonald (1955) do not mention this species, though Hall & Moreau (1970) record it as occurring near Shambe on the upper Nile and at the periphery of the Ethiopian highlands near the Sudanese border. Although Mackworth Praed & Grant (1957) give the range of *E.a. peasei* as central and southern Sudan and Abyssinia, there are very few records for the Sudan (G. Nikolaus). The sighting of a flock of c. 40 near the Nile at Kosti, some 700 km north of Shambe, is therefore worthy of note.

SPANISH SPARROW *Passer hispaniolensis*

At least 10 were seen in cultivation near Suakin (19°05'N, 37°20'E), on the Red Sea coast 3-5 March. Cave & Macdonald (1955) record this species as

being a "very common non breeding visitor", though the species only winters in northern Sudan (Moreau 1972). Whilst there are a few records away from the Nile valley in northern Sudan (Butler 1911, Mackenzie 1955), there are no previous records from the Red Sea coast (G. Nikolaus).

SLENDER-BILLED WEAVER *Ploceus pelzelni*

A pair seen in reedy vegetation along the Nile in Nimule National Park (3°35'N, 32°04'E) in April, represent the first record of this species from the Sudan (G. Nikolaus). Previous Nile records are from some 120 km upstream (Hall & Moreau 1970).

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Gerhardt Nikolaus for his knowledge of and help with records of importance.

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